ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Women, work and pandemic: An impact study of COVID-19 lockdown on working women in India

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Abstract

The first wave of the pandemic caused due to COVID-19 was marked by a complete lockdown in India in March 2020. This unprecedented time and global health crisis pushed everyone indoors and compelled all employees to work from home (WFH). This study is an attempt to explore the challenges and possibilities of the WFH scenario in the context of working women in India. Around 203 women professionals participated through Google form questionnaire from May–June 2020 to fathom the impact of lockdown while working in the WFH format. This study employs the *'the Standpoint theory'* and the theory of *'Performative action'* by Judith Butler to grasp the work-life balance and gender roles in family spaces. The results of the study have shown that although the spouses of these women are sharing some responsibilities of household and children, but still the main onus rests on women's shoulders. The identities attached with their working and non-working status have been fused with the arrival of paid work at home. The majority of the respondents reported that they have to give a big share of their time to household activities by compromising their work efficacy on the job.

KEYWORDS
COVID-19, India, pandemic, work from home, working women

1 | INTRODUCTION

A disease that is caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2 has emerged as a global crisis fathoming the borders. The first case was identified in the city of Wuhan in China. Subsequently, the world got in its grip battling with unprecedented changes for human existence. On 30 January 2020, World Health Organization declared this global crisis as, 'public health emergency of international concern' (Dryhurst et al., 2020: 995). In India, a complete lockdown was imposed on 24 March 2020 after the declaration of COVID-19 as a national disaster, but India's response to the pandemic was largely seen 'unplanned and experimental: at worst, it has been violent, stigmatising and fatal' (Rahman, 2020: 132). Few studies done during the lockdown period across the world reveal that the situation of women even in developed countries as Iceland who remained at the top of the 'Gender Gap Index' for many years witnessed 'uneven division of labour that they might have been too busy in their daily lives to observe or might have found difficult to acknowledge...and brought to light pre-existing gendered performances and social structures'(Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir, 2021: 2). This unprecedented time gives a glimpse of deeply entrenched and unequal gendered social structure that actually exists inside the family institution but in latent form. The present study is an attempt to comprehend the changes, challenges and possibilities of the work from home scenario largely surfaced with the first wave of the pandemic by COVID-19 and its lockdowns in India, with specific reference to the working women professionals. This research primarily relied on the women professionals working from various cities across India. Since there was a complete check on the mobility during the lockdown period, the only viable option left with the authors was

to use Google Form as the tool of data collection. Around 250 Google Forms were sent to the respondents from the authors' connections. It started on 4 May 2020, and the response was disabled on 10 June 2020. The total responses up to this time were counted as 203. Thus, the study is based on the responses received by these 203 representative respondents.

Here, the focus is on the women working professionals with higher educational qualifications, who seem to come in the bracket of upper-middle sections of the society, with the assumed belief of their empowerment and independence, and that they might not have to face discrimination by the dominant patriarchal structure of Indian society. Further, this analysis has specifically concentrated on the working women's family space (inworld) with almost negligible or marginal reference to their role and assessment in their work sphere. Data have been collected between May and June 2020, when the whole world was largely under the grip of COVID-19 pandemic and India witnessed its first wave. During this period, major parts of India were under complete lockdown. Questionnaires (framed in the form of Google Form) and some telephonic interaction (where required) have been used as the main tool for data collection. A non-probability sample is drawn by using the authors' social networks. For the collection of data, a Google Form was designed with questions aimed to explore the work from home experience with other family and personal responsibilities, and leisure activities of the working women professionals amid the lockdown. Women were also asked questions on their male partners and their role in household work during this period. Direct questions were not asked from the male partners, and we also acknowledge the limitations of this aspect, as the direct inputs from the male spouses/partners would have been more insightful. Data have been analysed by applying the quantitative methodology that is primarily based on percentage analysis. The targeted survey in this study helps us to understand an array of social, psychological, health and caring responsibilities that increased the burden of working women during the period of lockdown.

Whenever any disaster or crisis arrives, it harshly strikes on the marginal, poor and socially excluded from ages. The past crisis experiences such as the economic recession have also indicated that catastrophes unequally affected men and women (Boca et al., 2020). Historically too, women have been treated unequally. The inequitable impact of disasters and challenges on the genders has now been a well-accepted aspect in research and recovery programmes of cataclysmic events (Ear, 2017; Ikeda, 1995; Neumayer & Plümper, 2007; Thorat, 2008). Fothergill and Squier (2018) affirm the argument about the disproportionate impact of vulnerabilities in disasters and crisis scenario and through their comprehensive study on the 2015 Earthquake in Nepal; they unravel that though women and children are the most vulnerable but they possess 'capacities, skills, and knowledge that contribute to both disaster risk reduction and disaster recovery for their families and their communities', so their potential should be acknowledged and supported to 'lessen vulnerability, reduce losses, and increase resilience for their families and communities' (Fothergill & Squier, 2018:270). The international guidelines have started focusing on this facet, Indian policy guidelines still fall short in considering the gender angle in disaster rehabilitation. Crisis surfaced with calamities become grave impediments in development work and achieving the targets of global goals as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the post-disaster scenarios unless women are strengthened, and gendered models of rehabilitation are included in the recovery plans (Bhadra, 2017).

The disasters that emerged before the COVID pandemic affected women in a very different way as compared to this time. Earlier women used to reduce their working hours or for the time being, and they stepped down from their job (Andrew et al.,2020), but this pandemic brought the compulsion of complete lockdown where especially working women with their multiple roles such as wife, mother and daughter-in-law needed to perform all the household activities along with their paid job (Andrew et al., 2020; Carlson et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2021; Craig and Churchill, 2021; Hennekam and Shymko, 2020; Manzo and Minello, 2020; Qian and Fuller, 2020). This global health crisis compelled all the businesses, industries and institutions to shut down their services physically and forced their employees (where possible) to work from home so that the world can curb the spread of this infectious virus. This scenario has posed newer challenges, and overnight regular employees have to be tuned with new terminology; that is, 'work from home (WFH) employees' which was earlier depended on the choice of the employees, now transformed to 'mandatory work from home (MWFH)' (Kniffin et al., 2021:65). To operationalize work from home, one needs to have proper infrastructure, facilities and space, apart from other adjustments and challenges of remote working (International Labour Organisation, 2020:14–23), but people who are lacking in required necessities for WFH have to navigate or carve out such space amid limitations and new grown responsibilities. It was not plain sailing as the lockdown caught everyone completely unprepared and gave no time for planning. Further, more problems and challenges have been registered among women who are working and with children. Although a positive shift has also been seen in the equal distribution of household and child care between men and women, still the extra work falls on the women (Queisser et al., 2020; Farré and González, 2020; Sevilla & Smith, 2020).

2 | WORKING WOMEN REALITY IN INDIA

In India, the number of wage/salaried employees has increased to 23 per cent in 2017–18. In absolute terms, there has been a significant jump of around 2.62 crore new jobs in the regular wage/salaried employees. The Economic Survey 2019-20, published by Goverment of India also reported that, "the proportion of women workers in the regular wage/salaried employees' category has also increased by 8 per cent (from 13 per cent in 2011–12 to 21 per cent in 2017–18) with the addition of 0.71 crore new jobs for female workers in this category" (Ministry of Finance Government of India, 2020: 283).

Women account for almost half of India's population, but their participation in the labour market is just one-third. Over the period, the number of young women has also increased in educational institutes. This is an achievement at one hand; however, 'among young females around 52.3 per cent were engaged in domestic activities in 2017–18 and this proportion has increased over the last two decades. For the productive age group (15–59 years), about 60 per cent of working age females were outside the labour market attending to domestic duties only' (Ministry of Finance Government of India, 2020 : 290). The social norms expect and bound women to take care of the unpaid job at home. A large section of women in India have to bear the burden of the domestic unpaid work in their homes due to their less participation in the paid job. A World Bank Report on female labour force participation in India mentions that their participation has fallen by almost 30 per cent during the last 20 years (Kamdar, 2020).

Women participation in the workforce has been conditioned and determined largely within the patriarchal structure. A survey by Economic and Political Weekly found that in India around 40–60 per cent of men and women both have the belief that women should not work outside, whose husbands have good earning jobs (Kamdar, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that in the situations where women's paid work is labelled as secondary, it means surviving rate of women with their paid work becomes grimmer in the houses where the demand for their unpaid work is more. Hence, the present study's results have shown that this scenario amplifies more during the COVID-19 pandemic when women have to work even more than they did before lockdown. The support in the form of domestic workers stopped, and all the onus of the household work fell on their shoulders.

3 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Humans have a distinct advantage of doing certain tasks, in which they might specialize while sharing the resultant outcome for the benefit of all. After the discrediting of the Marxist theory on which the standpoint theory is based, a lot has been lost in theory and practice, yet the standpoint theory can help build a much more relevant background for studying the work-life balance in the lives of working women (Hekman, 1997). The Marxist roots help us to formulate and understand the division of work and the post-modernist discourse of the work which is situated around the public and private spheres of the working women. The oppression and dual burden faced by women in India can be justifiably explained by the use of standpoint theory in its anti-materialistic and post-modernist form of understanding. The aim is to move away from the object reality approach to the paradigm of subjectivity which takes into account how reflexively can understand the ongoing struggles of the women working from home (Harding, 1992). The politics of the patriarchal setup which is witnessed at both the private and public spaces can be studied, and the standpoint theory can help raise and reformulate arguments along with the performative action theory (Butler, 1988).

Performative understanding of the female roles in the presentation of the stereotypes of gender roles is important in the post-COVID-19 era which highlights the conversion of the public with the private. The power dynamics can hence be studied to understand the construction of knowledge of power as seen through the current aspects (Disch, 1999). The gender roles constitute how human experiences are shaped up in the society. The theory of performativity helps us to understand not only the behaviours shaped by gender roles but also the structure of how the gender functions in one society. One needs to deconstruct these narratives to fit through a post-modernist understanding of how legitimate discourses are being shaped around the gender realities of women. Given the complex nature of gender relations, it becomes even more important to constitute our understanding on interrelated parts of gender and the privileges and entitlements awarded to different genders for the performance of their specific gender roles (Flax, 1987). Through two levels of understanding, that is gender roles as construed through social conditioning and through the placements of gender roles in the life world, feminist theories can deconstruct the structural practices of gender realities. The difference between sex and gender has been clearly explained by the feminist theories, but based on conventional lines, this paper utilizes the term 'Sexual division of labour' to study the work-life balance of working women in the context of COVID-19.

Several studies show the male as the bearer for the family and of the civilization, leading to explain the strong female subordination well entrenched in the ideas of sexual dichotomy based in the social and economic structure of our society. The behavioural patterns are well reflected in the social roles which in turn bring out the differences in position of men and women in the social hierarchies. Thus, both sexual division of labour and social roles become an important component through which our study can analyse the regulated roles which are being performed by working women during the pandemic. Working women have been required to maintain coordination between the family and work that we also seen in the results of this study. Thereby, it makes crucial for women to balance between both in their private and professional lives. The work from home environment has only contributed to the pressure as the private and professional spaces have been merged leading to stresses of balancing the pressures of home and the demands that their professional work requires.

It is hence important to study the sexual division of labour and the social roles which are allocated because of it to working women in uncertain times such as COVID-19. Gendered social roles have emerged as a function that suit power positions in the patriarchal set-up.

4 | DATA PRESENTATION: PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The data have been drawn from 203 respondents across the country, and among them, the major responses received from the respondents belonging to Rajasthan State (34.482%), then Maharashtra (13.793%), New Delhi (10.344%), Uttar Pradesh (8.374%), Haryana (6.4%) and other states as shown in Table 1. Around 60% of the respondents fall in the age group of 31–45 years. Nearly, 65.52% of them are married. The majority (59.6%) of the respondents are working in education/research or teaching centres, and 47.78% of the women are working in the government sector while more are working in the private sector (48.28%). The majority of them (55.67%) have been living with their family members who range from 2 to 4 members, and almost half of the respondents (47.78%) have kids. Overall, 59.60% of the participants are living in a nuclear family structure, while 30.54% of them are staying with their extended families.

5 | BIG RESPONSIBILITY: CHILD REARING AND CARING

Even in the 21st century in women's lives, the biggest and most important responsibility is still considered to be the prime caretaker of the home and children. Before the lockdown, when life was sailing on the normal boat, the schedule for everything was fixed and women were at least getting sometime for themselves when their children use to be busy in school and other outdoor activities.

With the closure of schools and colleges, the online learning format engaged all the students and even the mothers of younger children. In most cases, mothers and in few, fathers accompany and have to sit with their children especially with the younger ones for the online classes and train them in this newly emerged model of schooling. This has been seen as an extra component in the already overflowing basket of women' domestic responsibilities. Even the results of the study done by Boca et al., 2020 (with the question to know the impact of lockdown during COVID-19 among couples where both partners are working) also revealed that all the additional household and childcare work during that period fell on women more, although men too helped but their help was majorly restricted to childcare activities and especially for their education (Boca et al., 2020: 1001).

TABLE 1 Profile of the respondents

Background characteristics	Percentage	n
Andhra Pradesh	1.48	03
Assam	0.98	02
Bihar	0.49	01
Chhattisgarh	0.99	02
Goa	0.49	01
Gujrat	1.97	04
Haryana	6.40	13
Himachal Pradesh	0.49	01
Hyderabad	0.98	02
Jammu and Kashmir	3.94	08
Jharkhand	0.49	01
Karnataka	4.43	09
Kerala	0.98	02
Madhya Pradesh	2.46	05
Maharashtra	13.79	28
New Delhi	10.34	21
Odisha	0.49	01
Punjab	1.48	03
Rajasthan	34.48	70
Tamil Nadu	3.45	07
Uttar Pradesh	8.37	17
West Bengal	0.98	02
Total	100	203

The data from the study show that 47.8% (*n* = 97) of the working women are having children. 74.2% of these 97 respondents reported that due to lockdown their children have to attend online classes who earlier use to go physically to the regular schools. The compulsion of online learning exerts extra pressure on the parents to create an environment at home that can appear like school, but it is reported that more mothers have to sit with their children as compared to the fathers. Then, the majority (64%) of the respondents also reported that their children mostly need assistance for online classes. In these cases, the children are too young to manage the online classes and its system on their own. A few (10.3%) occasionally need their parents' aid, when they have to give their weekly tests, internal examinations, class presentations through video recordings or photo/pdf submissions, etc., largely for more technical issues. 36.9% of the respondents also mentioned that along with managing their kids' online studies, they have to spend more time in other activities to keep them engaged inside the home.

The results have also shown consistency with the findings from another research, that is, Boca et al., 2020 that working women who were having children aged 0–5 years have to struggle a lot to have a balance between work and home during COVID-19.

6 | WORKING HOUR FLEXIBILITY

The corporations and organizations are allowing maximum women to work from home and offering them flexible work timelines, barring few women who are required to move out of the house for their work. In this changed work scenario where work from home occupied prominence, many (30.5%) do not have a proper workspace at their houses. And around 36% do not have all the requisite material and equipment for the work from home. The notable challenges that are faced by women in their official work while functioning from home are the household chores (49.3%), too many distractions at home (48.3%), social isolation and lack of face-to-face interaction (45.8%), poor Internet connectivity and data-related issues (39.9%) and difficulty in keeping a regular schedule (36.5%). Apart from above, women also faced various issues in operating from home as lack of resources for functioning online (30%), lack of proper communication with co-workers (29.1%), care responsibility of elderly/children/sick at home (27.6%), general anxiety about the impact of coronavirus (22.7%) and the problem with procuring proper nutritive food (14.8%). Women even noted that the risk of online harassment and abuse (8.9%) has also proved to be a challenging aspect while working from home.

7 | PROJECTION IN THE HOUSEHOLD WORK

In almost every society, household responsibilities and housework are the onus of the women in the family. In India, before the arrival of corona and lockdown, women were at least having some support in terms of domestic servants, but the change emerged, with the complete shutdown, in the quantum of work of women, though it did not affect men's working arrangements in the same way. Researchers have revealed that majorly women in almost all the countries have to spend more time on housework than before and they are the ones who had to bear with all this additional amount of work (Boca et al., 2020).

About 76% of the respondents reported that they had regular domestic help for household work before COVID-19. While working from home in the lockdown, managing household work appeared to be a significant responsibility for the working women. Around 16.7% of the women stated that they have no help from anyone for their household chores after the lockdown restrictions. Interestingly, nearly 42.4% of the married women (i.e. 65.52%) claimed that, to some extent, their husbands assisted them in discharging domestic responsibilities. The rest were partially aided by the parents/in-laws (31.5%), domestic help (17.2%), children (14.3%) and siblings (11.3%). Hence, mostly working women find it expressly stressful to work from home along with the household chores, without significant support from their partners or any other family member. This was distinctly perceived in the conversations with the respondents, as mentioned by one of the respondents;

> 'With the lockdown, my maid stopped, then a lot of burden came to me for overall household chores....along with my child's studies...that became online and my own work...[sic]'

On the question of receiving help in this increased burden of work from the other family members, she elaborated further that,

> 'Although my husband helped me in taking care of our child's online classes and homework but other child care activities along with extensive cooking have increased a lot work burden... which was largely taken care by my maid'.

Further, a similar experience was narrated by another participant;

> '...though my sasu-ma (mother-in-law) started helping at least...by washing her utensils...also doing cutting and chopping of vegetables...but... still... not enough as it was easier when my maid was here...'

These conversations gave noteworthy observations regarding the role of other family members. Though the respondents mentioned the help by their spouses and other members, it can be observed that only partial aid was available to them. Table 2

Further, 54.2% of the working women respondents reported that their major time goes into cooking. With these responsibilities, they also have to give time to their family like through chatting, games, watching TV together, etc. Table 3

8 | UNCERTAINTIES AT PROFESSIONAL FRONT

The lockdown increased the overall workload especially for the women who are working too. The data have also shown that the lockdown caused low official work productivity as stated by almost 58.6% of the respondents too. 54.2% of the working women respondents think that the COVID-19 lockdown brought more uncertainties to their career prospects. The insecurities borne with the lockdown regarding employees losing jobs went high. Although the Indian government made announcements to keep paying the employees during the crisis, the Centre for Monitoring India Economy (CMIE) data showed that in India by April, 17.7 million people lost their jobs and by May the numbers added with 0.1 million further, but by July it has been concluded that in total it became 5 million (Ray, 2020). Table 4

9 | LOCKDOWN PERIOD AS SILVER LINING

The respondents experienced a range of emotions in this period such as mood swings (44.3%), stress (34.5%), (32.5%) scared due to uncertainties, (30%) lack of motivation, (22.7%) lethargic and (15.8%) faced anger management issues. The lockdown curbed human and outside social interactions and also movement that perceptibly affected them, as expressed by one of the respondent named Sunita (pseudonym);

> 'Before the lockdown, when I was going to my office… at least I was able to get a cup of tea at my table… that was a kind of stress buster and relief from all the work and engagements that I have at my home… earlier I use to get some time to chat and talk with my close workmates. But, now my whole time… is going in managing work and household responsibilities…. (sic)'.

While some informed positive impacts too as 36.9% of the women reported a renewed focus on building immunity and healthy lifestyle. They started giving time for their fitness activities and that has become a welcome addition to their lockdown life. Along with physical health, a concern for mental well-being was also visible as 28.6% of them devoted to religious and spiritual activities as meditation, etc. Around 54.2% of the respondents felt that they got time for rest, leisure and other entertainment activities during the lockdown. 64% of the respondents expressed to have

TABLE 2 Working women with children

Variables	Percentage	N
Women with kids		
Yes	47.78	97
No	52.22	106
Total	100	203
Online classes of children		
Yes	74.2	71
No	25.8	26
Total	100	97
Children need help in online classes		
Yes	64.00	62
Sometimes	10.3	10
No	25.7	25
Total	100	97
Need time to spend with children		
With homework	36.9	36
Playing	38.4	37
Both	24.7	24
Total	100	97

TABLE 3 Challenges faced in work from home

Variables	Percentage	N
Workspace at home		
Yes	69.50	141
No	30.50	62
Requisite material and equipment at home		
Yes	64.00	130
No	36.00	73
Total	100	203
Challenges faced in WFH[*]		
Household chores	49.30	100
Too much distractions	48.30	98
Social isolation	45.80	93
Poor Internet connectivity	39.90	81
Difficulty in keeping regular schedule	36.50	74
Lack of resources for functioning online	30.00	61
Lack of proper communication	29.10	59
Care responsibilities at home	27.60	56
Anxiety and stress due to corona outside	22.70	46
Problem with nutrition	14.80	30
Online harassment and abuse	8.90	18

[*]Multiple answers.

TABLE 4 Household work

Question	Answers	Percentage
Who helps you in Household chores during lockdown?	There is no one who help me after domestic maid stopped	16.7
	Husbands started helping	42.4
	Parent-in-laws	31.5
	Domestic help who stays at home	17.2
	Children	14.3
	Siblings	11.3

enjoyed cooking at home, 59.9% of them enjoyed spending time with the family members, 50.8% of the women spent their leisure time watching movies, web series, serials, etc. Other activities such as video/audio calls to family, friends, etc. (32.5%), spending time on social media, Internet browsing (32%), engaged in self-introspection and spending time with oneself (26.4%), pursuing hobbies (26.1%), binge-watched video content (23.6%) also kept these women positively engaged amid this stressed phase. Few women even added that gardening, household chores, watching all news channels and getting COVID-19 updates become an integral part of this new scenario. Table 5

10 | DISCUSSION

The crisis prevailing due to the COVID-19 pandemic is providing new opportunities to revisit and rethink the underlying inequalities. Inequalities in society often show up in varied forms such as class, race, ethnicity and gender. On the whole, the pandemic phase has thrown light on deeply entrenched and gendered social structures within the organization of the family (Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir, 2021).

> A feminist response to COVID-19 is one that endeavors not only to minimize the harmful effects of oppressive societal structures that disadvantage many women and girls, but to catalyze action that will build more equal societies for the future (Kelly, 2020:112).

TABLE 5 Negative and positive impacts of lockdown

Question	Answers	Percentage
Negative impacts of lockdown	Mood swings	44.3
	Stress	34.50
	Scared due to uncertainties	32.50
	Lack of motivation	30.00
	Lethargic	22.70
	Anger management issues	15.80
Positive impacts of lockdown	Got time for fitness regime as yoga	36.90
	Time for Religious/spiritual/meditation	28.60
	More time for rest/leisure	54.20
	Enjoyed cooking	64.00
	Got time to spend with family	59.90
	Got time for watching Movies/Series	50.80
	Video/audio calls to other family members	32.50
	Times on social media	32.00
	Self-introspection	26.40
	Pursuing hobbies	26.10

This period has created new complexities along with the already existing and ongoing convolutions within the families in the form of gender. Even in the most developed countries such as Iceland, researchers found that the family responsibilities and care of the children heavily pounce on the mother's working hours than their fathers (Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir, 2021).

After the announcement of lockdown in India when the whole work shifted inside the homes, many women reported their inability to differentiate between work (paid) and non-work (unpaid and of household). The inability to differentiate between work and life has been the reason for increased pressure on working individuals. In the contemporary age, the time has been transformed into a 'resource' (Fyhri & Hjorthol, 2009). The equation of power and control is also manifested in the usage of time; for example, men have more control over their work outside the home but females always have to rush back to their homes for domestic responsibilities (Bryson & Derry, 2010). In other words, the time has also shown its 'gendered' nature.

A new challenge emerged in front of the working women to maintain the difference between work and non-work, as the household work has often been labelled as invisible work. On these lines, the present study tries to dig out and comprehend the negotiations that individuals do between work and non-work identities when they have to do WFH. This study also tries to understand the individuals experience in the work and non-work spheres and how these influences each other. In women's lives often her major share of household responsibilities goes uncredited and it is often seen in the category of non-work. Before the lockdown, when women had to work outside, their role as working and at home mostly remained segregated and did not merge, but, in this period where all the family members stayed indoors, the biggest challenge these women confronted was to differentiate between their professional and household work. They had to juggle between both the fronts. When the respondents were asked to specify the three challenges they faced while working from home, the majority complained about a lot of distractions at home while WFH, household chores and lack of face-to-face interactions with the outside world. All these challenges aggravated their stress levels in the existing situation.

The lockdown period has been one of the most challenging times during this COVID-19 pandemic. Every crisis also brings several health issues such as stress, permanent feeling of exhaustion and isolation. Some studies reported that informal chats, handshakes and meetings in the workplaces are important for mental and physical well-being (Mogilner, Whillans & Norton, 2018; Schroder, Risen, Gino & Norton, 2019). These psychological emotions not only impact the health of the employees rather also influence the employees'affective commitment and performances (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Further, during the complete lockdown when the whole work shifted inside the homes, the question of sickness and mild illness went unstated as working from home largely did not consider such health issues as worthy enough for leave. This increased stress and mental health issues that also burdened other members of the family. National Commission for Women (NCW) also reported that in 2020, when the whole world was compelled to shift indoors, the number of complaints of crime against women sharply rose from 2,960 in 2019 to 5,297 in 2020 (Times of India, 2021). Earlier, the range of domestic violence cases often went unreported but NCW in April 2020 revealed that it spiked almost 100% in the lockdown period as more people were staying in the houses for longer periods and also working from home (Joy, 2020).

11 | CONCLUSIONS

The ongoing pandemic crisis has given the chance to scholarly revisit and revive the engrained socio-historical patriarchal dominance. The present study also proved that although the modern world has opened many paths for the women to upgrade their social status in the society, the kind of additional burden that women have to bear especially in the crisis times worsens their position as reported in the study. Therefore, there is a requirement to maintain a good home environment to bring some normalcy. Hence, the family needs to work as a unit and lessen the sexual demarcated work stereotypes. Working women have to prioritize their home life, professional situations and their physical well-being, which needs constant motivation and support from the family members. The study reveals transitional times wherein most of the women are getting help from their families to support their work; however, a significant percentage of women are still handling the burden of the excessive household as well as professional work, which may further lead to the development of stress, depression and anxiety among them. Working women can seek involvement from their partners and families in reducing this workload by redefining the social roles which are complicit in the gendered division of labour. Societal role expectations which are prevalent in the minds of the people are responsible for producing a social consensus that requires females to be primarily responsible for both child-rearing and household chores. The proximal determinants of this are based on the stereotyped gender roles which are assigned in a patriarchal setup of the society. Gender roles and the expectations around them need to change according to the demands of the changing public and private spaces.

The variations in these gendered roles assigned due to sexual division of labour can affect broader societal patterns which may shift the responsibility of children and household work being assigned to women and bring out the real work-life balance wherein the partners play an instrumental role in helping out with routine household work and giving successful strides to cooperative social and economic spaces in these uncertain times. Furthermore, this balance will strive to bring in balance in the decision-making power of the working women as both power and patriarchy play a significant role in structuring gendered labour. There is a growing interest that focuses on the roles of cooperative breeding in a family unit.

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